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ABSTRACT

Variety in homework is one way to achieve educational excellence in social studies. The twin social studies goals of teaching basic knowledge and teaching reasoning/critical thinking skills are accomplished by providing variety. In accordance with Lee and Pratt's homework taxonomy, homework can be placed under one of the following: preparation, practice, extension, or creativity. The goal of teaching basic knowledge is emphasized through factual recall (preparation) and basic skills (practice). The goal of teaching reasoning/critical thinking skills is emphasized when the application of the classroom lesson occurs through transference (extension) and synthesis (creativity). The document's appendices include: (1) "The Effects of Preparation and Practice Homework on Student Achievement in Tenth-Grade American History" (H. C. Foyle) and the homework form used in this study; (2) a week-long homework assignment form; (3) a fiction book report form; (4) a non-fiction book report form; (5) a magazine article report form; (6) a television program critique form; (7) a news comparison form; (8) an oral report grading sheet; and (9) a vacation homework form for elementary students. (DJC)

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Homework Variety: A way to educational excellence

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Homework Variety: A way to educational excellence

"Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavor."
Cowper (1785)

Homework not only leads to educational excellence but variety in homework adds spice to the social studies. Excellence in the social studies classroom can be carried beyond the classroom through homework. Current interest in homework was heightened by the national impact of the educational report, A Nation at Risk (National Commission, 1983). In regard to the expectations of student homework, the Commission found that the amount of homework for high school seniors had decreased (two-thirds report less than 1 hour a night). In the findings regarding time, the Commission found that the time spent in the classroom and on homework is often used ineffectively. The Commission concluded that students in high school should be assigned far more homework than is now the case. However, in this researcher's view, the issue is not whether more homework should be assigned (a quantitative question). Research would indicate that the answer is clearly an affirmative one (Foyle & Bailey, 1984). Rather the issue is what type of homework should be assigned (a qualitative question).

Variety in homework is one way to achieve educational excellence in the social studies. Social studies instructors usually handle homework in a routine and simplistic fashion. Students are assigned textbook pages to read and items to write. This pattern is traditionally followed in most social studies classes. However, social studies homework should not be taken lightly. Rather it should be used to foster the twin goals of social studies: (1) teaching basic knowledge and (2) teaching reasoning/critical thinking skills.

Variety in social studies homework can be achieved by considering homework 's four basic purposes or types in conjunction with the two previously described social studies goals. Rather than considering homework as one entity, homework should be examined in accordance with Lee and Pruitt's (1979) homework taxonomy. All forms of homework can be placed under one of the four following types of homework: (1) preparation, (2) practice, (3) extension, and (4) creativity.

Goal: Basic knowledge

The goal of teaching basic knowledge is carried on outside of the social studies classroom through preparation homework and practice homework. These two types of homework emphasize factual recall knowledge and basic skills.

Preparation Homework: getting ready

Preparation homework occurs when the student is getting ready before the classroom lesson is presented by the teacher. This approach is the typical social studies approach to homework. Pages are read and questions are answered by the student in advance of the classroom lesson.

Practice Homework: doing again

Practice homework happens when the student is doing again concepts or skills of the lesson after the classroom lesson was presented by the teacher. Most often this type of homework is found in mathematics or typing.

Do homework assignments always need to be given before the lesson? The answer to this question is "no". The social studies teacher can give basic homework as either preparation or practice. Foyle (1985) conducted a classroom experiment (Emporia, Kansas) in tenth-grade American history (n=131) which found that either preparation homework or practice homework can be given to students in order to increase student achievement. There was no statistical difference among groups. Both the preparation homework group and the practice homework group increased in student achievement when compared to the no-homework group (Appendix A). Thus, variety can be introduced at the basic knowledge level by assigning homework not only as preparation but as practice in social studies.

In conjunction with using these two types of homework, there are five basic guidelines for dealing with the homework. Homework should be (1) regularly assigned, (2) clearly stated, (3) regularly collected, (4) promptly graded, and (5) promptly returned (Foyle & Bailey, 1985). An example of a clearly stated homework assignment would be the daily homework assignment sheet used in the Emporia experiment (Appendix B). Students have the instructions at the top of a ditto sheet and write their responses on that sheet. The homework assignment is written accurately by the teacher for the student. The student does not rely upon faulty vision when the homework assignment is written on the chalkboard or upon faulty hearing when it is verbally stated by the teacher. This type of assignment sheet can be given as either preparation or practice homework. Another approach is the week-long homework assignment sheet (Appendix C). Students integrate their homework into their weekly schedule. In this manner, students complete preparation or practice homework depending upon their own schedule. Either type homework increases student achievement. Assigning students either preparation or practice homework provides variety in social studies homework.

Goal: Reasoning/critical thinking skills

The goal of teaching reasoning/critical thinking skills is carried on outside of the social studies classroom through extension homework and creativity homework. These two types of homework emphasize the application of the classroom lesson through transference and synthesis.

Extension Homework: going beyond

Extension homework occurs when the student is going beyond the classroom lesson or transferring ideas and/or skills into new situations. Extension is one type of homework that social studies instructors often wish students would complete. A cherished goal of most teachers is the situation in which students go beyond the regular class lesson. However, motivation and method are needed to get students to do more than the bare minimum homework required in a course. Motivation can be provided by making extension homework required as a regular course assignment or for extra credit.

For example, the lesson may cover Napoleon. Students can be motivated to read a book about Napoleon by giving class credit. The teacher can use various report forms in assigning extension homework. A fiction book report form (Appendix D; Foyle, 1975) or non-fiction book report form (Appendix E) can cover specific social studies concepts so that the student is not giving a book jacket report. Furthermore, the teacher can use a magazine article report form (Appendix F; Foyle, 1975) so that the student writes more than a quick summary of the article.

In order to extend upon a current events discussion, teachers can assign a television program critique form (Appendix G). The student selects a news program or any other program to watch and evaluate. Class discussion could focus on the student's critique. A news comparison (Appendix H) would be another way of assigning extension homework. The student would analyze a written news story about the same event or person. Using two newspapers or two news magazines, the student looks for similarities and/or differences in reporting the same story. During political elections, this news comparison report helps a student see different approaches to reporting news that is theoretically identical. The student's written report is the basis for a class discussion or extra credit.

Creativity Homework: putting together

Creativity homework occurs when the student is putting together concepts and skills learned during classroom lessons in new and different ways. Creativity homework can be accomplished through oral reports. A student asks an interesting question, "Why did Hannibal use elephants to cross the Alps?" Assigning the student an oral report for credit can provide a form of creativity homework. Building in the creativity is the difficult part. With an oral report grading sheet (Appendix I) which the student has in advance, the student knows the expectations of the teacher on the

element of creativity. Each part of the form can be of equal weight or differentiated weight in accordance with the teacher's emphasis. The element of creativity can be weighted heavier than the other elements of the oral report.

In the example of Hannibal, a student brought a stuffed elephant to class and compared it with a toy tank. In a course on early American history, a student built a farm out of Popsicle sticks and toothpicks to explain about life on a homestead. A student built a papier-mache model of the Battle of Gettysburg to explain about the battle by moving small soldiers around the battlefield. Other students built a sugar cube castle, sewed U.S. and Confederate flags, and made a wooden Kansas State seal.

These four types of homework are not necessarily separate and isolated. For example, elementary students may go on vacation with their parents during the school year. This can be a teacher's chance to combine all four types of homework into an alternative classroom assignment around the idea of a vacation. The teacher assigns vacation homework which includes current school work and merges the new aspects of the trip (Appendix J).

The twin social studies goals of teaching basic knowledge and teaching reasoning/critical thinking skills are accomplished by providing variety in homework. In the basic knowledge area, student achievement can be raised by using preparation and practice homework. Student achievement in the reasoning/critical thinking skills area can be observed through extension and creativity homework. Homework variety meets these goals of social studies and is a way to educational excellence. Using the four types of homework, social studies teachers can provide variety, the spice of life.

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The Effects of Preparation and Practice Homework on Student Achievement in Tenth-Grade American History

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This experiment was designed and conducted to determine the effects of homework on the achievement of high-school social studies students at Emporia High School, Emporia, Kansas during the school year 1983-84. Two instruments were administered to the students: (1) the Differential Aptitude Test, Verbal Reasoning subtest, Form T, and (2) a teacher-made multiple-choice social studies test.

The sample contained 131 students from a total population of 1,181 students. Two instructors taught six intact American history classes that were randomly assigned to three groups: (1) 43 students in the preparation homework group, (2) 50 students in the practice homework group, and (3) 38 students in the no-homework group. A six week unit of instruction was identically taught to each group. The preparation homework group received homework before the class presentation covering the topic. The practice homework group received homework after the class presentation. The no-homework group did not receive any homework.

An analysis of covariance (.05), a Multiple Classification Analysis, and Tukey's HSD (.01) were computed. Null hypotheses were tested. The findings of the statistical analyses were (a) there was no significant difference (.05) in achievement mean scores between females and males within groups, (b) there was a significant difference (.05) in achievement mean scores between students who were assigned homework and students who were not assigned homework, and (c) there was no significant difference (.01) in achievement mean scores between

students who were assigned preparation homework and students who were assigned practice homework.

Conclusions of the study were (a) factual content homework increased the students' achievement when compared to the students who were not assigned homework, (b) either preparation homework or practice homework can be assigned to students since both types of homework raise students' achievement when compared to the students who were not assigned homework, and (c) females and males achieved the same regardless of the type of homework assigned to them.

Implications of this study were (a) time spent on factual recall homework does increase student achievement, and (b) preparation or practice homework should be assigned on the basis of teachers' goals, preferences, and teaching styles.

Appendix B

Homework

Chapter 2
Section 1

Name_____

Date_____

Hour_____

Directions

Read Chapter 2, Section #1, pp. 57-59.
Write your responses to the identify and questions 1 & 2, p. 59.

Appendix C

American History

Assignments for the week of
October 14th

The assignment is due on the date indicated.

Monday, October 14

Read Chapter 6, Section 1, pp. 138-142
Do #1,2,3 on p. 142 for notes

Tuesday, October 15

Read Chapter 6, Section 2, pp. 142-145
** Do #1,2 on p. 145 to hand in for credit

Wednesday, October 16

Read Chapter 6, Section 3, pp. 145-152
** Do #1,2 on p. 152 to hand in for credit

Thursday, October 17

Read Chapter 6, Section 4, pp. 152-155
Do #1,4 for notes on p. 155

Friday, October 18

Read Chapter 7, Section 1, pp. 158-161
** Do #2,3 on p. 161 to hand in for credit

Monday, October 21

Read Chapter 7, Section 2, pp. 161-166
Do #1,2 p. 166 for notes

FICTION
Book Report Form
American History-Government

Name_____

Date_____

Hour_____

1. Bibliography

Author's Name_____Title_____

City_____Publisher_____Date_____Pages_____

2. Characters

Main Character's Name_____
A. Physical Description:

B. Personality Description:

C. Important Actions:

D. Final Situation:

Supporting Character's Name_____
A. Physical Description:

B. Personality Description:

C. Important Actions:

D. Final Situation:

Fiction Book Report Form (Cont.)

3. Plot

A. General Theme (check one)
____Man vs. Man
____Man vs. Woman
____Man vs. Nature
____Man vs. Society

B. Describe the plot (movement of characters through the story; the conflict and resolution of the conflict):

C. State the opening situation:

D. State the closing situation:

E. Discuss the reality of the plot. How true-to-life is it? Give specific instances of the relationship of the plot to real life.

4. Sub-plot

A. Describe the sub-plot:

B. State the opening situation:

C. State the closing situation:

D. Discuss the reality of the sub-plot:

Fiction Book Report Form (Cont.)

5. Main Idea

A. State the Main Idea (Central Message; theme)_____

B. Locate the best statement of the main idea in the book. Page(s)____

C. Discuss the Main Idea in detail.

D. State the ways in which the Main Idea relates to you:

6. Historical Aspects

A. Period of time involved_____

B. Location involved_____

C. List specific references to historical occurences:

1. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

2. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

3. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

Fiction Book Report Form (Cont.)

7. Governmental Aspects

A. Governmental Form (Check One)
___Anarchy
___Democracy
___Dictatorship
___Monarchy
___Other: If other, Name It_____

B. Level of Government (Check One)
___Local
___State
___National
___International

C. State the location of the government_____

D. List specific points involving government:

1. Point_____Page(s)____

Time Period _____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

2. Point_____Page(s)____

Time Period _____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

3. Point_____Page(s)____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

Fiction Book Report Form (Cont.)

8. Evaluation

A. Author

1. Describe the style of writing and how it conveys the message or Main Idea:

2. Describe the author's point of view toward the message:

3. Describe the author's manner in which he ends the message—completes it:

B. Personal Feelings

1. Give your feelings toward the main character:

2. Toward the subject or message:

3. Toward the Plot:

4. Toward the Main Idea:

5. Give any reactions toward any aspect of the book that have not been covered previously:

Appendix E

Non-Fiction Book Report
American History-Government

Name_____

Date_____

Hour_____

1. Bibliography

Author's.Name_____Title_____

City_____Publisher_____Date_____Pages_____

2. Main Idea

A. Type of Book_____
(Man, Woman, Nature, Society)

B. Topic of Book_____
(History, Government, Other-Explain)

C. State the Main Idea in one sentence._____

_____

D. Locate the best statement of the main idea in the book. Pages_____

E. Discuss the main idea in detail.

F. State the ways in which the main idea relates to you:

3. Historical Aspects

A. Period of time involved_____.

B. Location involved_____.

C. List specific references to historical occurrences:

1. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

2. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

3. Occurrence_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

4. Governmental Aspects

A. Governmental Form_____.
(Anarchy, democracy, dictatorship, monarchy, other-explain)

B. Level of Government_____.
(Local, state, national, international)

C. State the location of the government_____

D. List specific points involving government:

1. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

2. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

3. Point_____Page(s)_____

Time Period_____Location_____

Relationship to Main Idea:

5. Evaluation

A. Author

1. Describe the style of writing and how it conveys the message or main idea:

2. Describe the author's point of view toward the message:

3. Describe the author's manner in which he ends the message--completes it:

B. Personal Feelings

1. Toward the main idea:

2. Toward the supporting data of the main idea:

3. Give any reactions toward any aspect of the book that have not been covered previously:

Appendix F

ARTICLE REPORT FORM

Name _____

Date _____Hour ____

Bibliography

1. Author:_____Article Title"_____"

2. Book or Magazine Title:_____Pages____

3. Publisher:_____City:_____Date:_____

Summary

4. Describe the main character(s):

5. Describe the plot:

6. List historical aspects and describe them:

7. Describe & list governmental aspects:

Evaluation

8. Give the main idea(s) the article conveyed to you:

9. Give your opinion or feelings toward the subject matter of the article:

10. Give any ideas that were new to your thinking or any new thoughts that were generated while you read the article:

Appendix G

Television Critique

Name of Program:

Type of Program:

Purpose of Program:

Stated:

Real:

Length of actual program:

Length of commercials total:

Types of advertising:

People involved by number, sex, race:

Relationship to today:

Write a paragraph using the above information to evaluate the program.

Appendix H

News Comparisons

In the two columns below, using the categories on the left, compare two news stories about the same event or person(s).

	Title:_____	Title:_____
News Summary		
Similarities (Use quotations)		
Differences (Use quotations)		
Conclusions (Most valuable, objective)		
Political Orientation (Dem., Rep., Ind., or favorable to leaders)		
Space allotted and location (Page number, size, column)		

Appendix I

Course _____
Period _____
Date _____

Oral Report

Name(s)

Summary

Content

Presentation

AV Aids

Evaluation

Summary: Did the report have a beginning, middle, and ending?
Content: Was the subject historical, significant, worth learning, and related to class?
Presentation: Was the report freely given? Was the reporter sure of the subject?
AV Aids: What use of aids was there? Photos, records, charts, diagrams, posters...
Evaluation: Did the reporter think about the subject or just copy down words? Was the reporter trying to make the material relevant to the class or merely mouthing words to finish a report. How much analysis was done in the report?

Appendix J

Vacation Homework (Elementary)

1. Know how to spell states you travel through. Spell also capitals of these states.

2. Write a report to share with the class when you get back. Include interesting sites you see, places you visit, animals you see. Be sure to include things that are different from where we live.

3. You may want to bring pamphlets, postcards, or drawings to go along with your report.

4. Math=do the 2 worksheets.

Author's Note:

This vacation homework assignment was given to a student in the fourth grade at William Allen White Elementary School in Emporia, Kansas during the spring of 1985.

Part 1 includes practice homework by spelling state names that were previously studied and extension homework by spelling state capital names that were not previously studied.

Part 2 includes creativity homework since the student is synthesizing information and presenting a report on the vacation.

Part 3 includes preparation homework since the student is gathering materials or getting ready for the oral report.

Part 4 includes practice homework covering mathematics concepts previously learned and extension homework covering the next level of mathematics which the student will miss while on vacation.